There is a belief among villagers that if the logs and branches of the unyielding tamarind trees are offered to sacred fire in front of temple, the trees will yield good crop next year. Hence, villagers offer branches of trees to the sacred fire. Normally, not more than one piece is carried by each person participating in the festival. This is being practiced on a very small scale where people carry branches and woodpieces from their own houses to use in the sacred fire in front of the temple, the quantity of which is insignificant. Due to the extension work undertaken by the Forest Department, the practice is getting discontinued slowly and now the ritual is only symbolic. The State Forest department has made efforts to generate awareness about the importance of trees in maintaining ecological balance

Noise Pollution

†5059. SHRI JHUMUK LAL BHENDIA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the Survey report of World Health Organisation stating that half of the population of Chennai, Calcutta, Mumbai and Delhi may go deaf if the present level of noise pollution in these metros increases by five decibel;

(b) if so, the targets set to save environment from the looming threat to human life and nature in other small and big cities, including metros, affected by noise pollution; and

(c) the reasons for one decibel increase in the level of noise pollution every year and the details of efforts being made by Government to check the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) According to the World Health Organization, no such study has been made.

(b) and (c) The Government have taken various measures to regulate and control noise pollution, which include the following:—

(i) Noise pollution has been included in the air (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act. Ambient standards in respect of noise for different categories of areas (residential, commercial, industrial and silence zones) have been notified under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

(ii) Noise limits have also been prescribed for automobiles, domestic appliances and construction equipment at the manufacturing stage.

†Original notice of the Question was received in Hindi.

(iii) Standards and guidelines for control of noise pollution from stationary diesel generator sets have been evolved and notified in January, 1999.

(iv) A Notification has also been issued specifying the standards for fire crackers in October, 1999.

(v) The Noise Pollution (Regulation & Control) Rules, 2000 has been notified on 14th February, 2000.

(vi) A code of practice has been evolved by the Central Pollution Control Board for control of noise.

Bio-diversity hot spots

5060. DR. ARUN KUMAR SARMA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) the places, including those in Indian sub-continent, identified as bio-diversity hot spots by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), indicating specialities of each spot;

(b) the position of the North-Eastern Region in the global environment map, especially in the context of environment pollution and endangered species;

(c) the State-wise list of endangered species now available in the North-Eastern Region; and

(d) the specific environmental problem identified and protective measures finalised to save ecology of the North- Eastern Region?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI BABU LAL MARANDI): (a) and (b) Dr. Norman Myers, a British scientist has identified 18 biodiversity hot spots in the world. These include Cape Region (South Africa), Upland Western Amazonia, Atlantic coastal Brazil, Madagascar, Philippines, Borneo (north), Eastern Himalaya, SW Australia, Western Ecuador, Colombian Choco, Peninsular Malaysia, Californian floristic province, Western Ghats, Central Chile, New Caladonia, Eastern Arc Mts (Tanzania), SW Sri Lanka, SW Cote d' Ivoire. North Eastern Region falls under the Eastern Himalaya hot spot. The other hot spot of the Indian subcontinent is Western Ghats. These hot spots are characterised by high concentration of endemic species and rapid rates of habitat loss.